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TYREE SCOTT
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INTERVIEWEE: TYREE SCOTT

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

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[00:00:00] TYREE SCOTT: Okay, well, my mother is like 10 years older than my father, and she worked. I was thinking about it the other day. My boy was trying to get his driver's license. My mother came into the bedroom, and she would say she was 14 years old. She went to get her first driver's license, and she drove past this sheriff's car on the way to the place to get the driver's license. She was 13 years old, and she saw a guy sitting there. She went in, and she drove past, she went to town, she got her license. On the way back, the guy stopped her, but she had her license. That's the kind of woman she is.

She's a—She raised her kids by herself and by and large, and worked as a cook from the time that she was--Well, after the first four kids were born. She was born and raised in the country, worked in the field. So her parents had a lot of property on both sides. My grandparents had property. In Texas, people settled the land back then, and they had 40-50 acres apiece. She grew up in a family like that. Even though she was a young woman

during the depression and stuff, because they lived on the farm, they didn't have to deal with all the problems with depression, because they were, by and large, self-sufficient. They raised the crops, and had chickens, and they raised the animals, farm animals and stuff like that, and yet they didn't feel that. I guess, as most farm families are, was independent. She still lives today, even though she moved to the city. But, I mean, she raised her kids that way, too.

Not the-- You talked about this before, the urban defeatist kind of attitude that is so prevailing now among poor people, certainly among Black people, just was not the prevailing attitude in my family, because my mother came in from that situation where there was a lot of--The question of insecurity, in terms of eating and paychecks and stuff, wasn't a problem, even though she had that because [inaudible] she's single and had these four kids. Even though she had that problem, she thought it was a first-generation kind of thing, and she didn't have to deal with the day-to-day. I mean, she might have dealt with it day to day, but it wasn't in her mind that was an ongoing thing that her children would have those same kinds of problems. There was a question of getting a good education and getting a good job for them. That was the prevailing attitude around the house. My big brothers and sisters in front of me--Well, my oldest didn't go to college. My youngest sister and my brother both went to college. You know, in the South, if you go to college--Most people can get out of high school, [inaudible] supporting going to college, but with all those Black colleges and stuff down there, my sister went to Prairie View, and my brother went to North Texas State. She's a strong woman. She had what was terminal cancer, supposed to be terminal cancer nine years ago, and there's not even a trace of it today. The woman in the room with her had a gallbladder problem or something. She was in the hospital, and this woman had a gallbladder problem, and the woman died.

My mother is still living, and that's typical of her. She believes that if you want to live, you live. Whatever you want to do, you can do it if you want to do it bad enough.

[00:05:08] WILLIAM LITTLE: Is she very religious?

[00:05:09] TYREE: No. No, she's not. She's not. You know, the Southern Baptist thing, the whole question of the South and church and stuff? And you know how your social life revolves around the church question? So, because of her age group and stuff, she believes in God and all of that, but she goes to church once every three or four months. She used to go more often when I was a kid. [inaudible] and she said she sent us every now and then. She didn't send us. She would've liked for us to come, but she didn't enforce it. I mean, in terms of her peers, she wasn't religious. In terms of us, we would say she was religious.

[00:06:02] WILLIAM: How about in terms of comparing her personality with that of your father's personality? You said she was strong-willed. Was she very emotional or just very rational, logical?

[00:06:14] TYREE: She was very rational, logical. She still is. I have discussions with my mother around political questions that my sisters, who are obviously 20-30 years younger than her, don't grasp, even to this day. My mother will, when we talk about the question of corporate interests in this country or something, 90% of the time, she ended up not only agreeing with me around the question of the role the corporations play in the country, even though news to her, but then started to put forward really concrete examples of stuff that she watched happen in her lifetime.

When I was getting ready to go to China, I was home a week before I went to China, and my stepfather died. We went to the funeral, and me and her were talking about China. All the folks were talking about, "Watch out for the Chinese," because they saw him as the enemy. She was really beautiful about it. She was so clear that

China was projected as the enemy by the media for such a long period of time, and then, all of a sudden, Nixon went to China in '72, and times changed. She was clear that China never was her enemy, that she just didn't know nothing about that country and the people there. But she knew they had a long history, much longer than this country. That's the kind of person she was.

[00:08:00] WILLIAM: Okay. Kind of--Can you kind of contrast the difference between your mother's and your father's personality?

[00:08:07] TYREE: Oh yeah. My father is a lot more passive. People remind me--In making a comparison, sometimes people always say, "Well, a man is forced out there in society every day and has to develop an attitude of being able to get along," but that's not true. My mother had to do the same thing. In describing him, he likes to put things in the context of morality. Even if I haven't talked about it, but he tried. He liked to sum things up in terms of morality instead of in terms of interest, even though he acts in terms of interest.

[00:09:12] WILLIAM: He acts in terms of interest?

[00:09:19] TYREE: Yeah. I mean, he's in business as a contractor. He charges as much as he can get for the amount of work that he does and all that to stay in business. Even though he doesn't charge as much as the man does, he still has to act in his interest. I think my mother is much more able to put things in a political context, even though she wouldn't describe it as being that. She would just say, "These factors here involved--This is how people are going to react to something. This is going to be the solution to these problems because of these particular elements." My father talks about right and wrong.

[00:10:02] WILLIAM: And he's got a definition of what's right, and he's already got a definition of what's wrong.

[00:10:06] TYREE: Yeah, right. He is much more set in his position. My mother ain't like that at all. She's old now, but if I sit down and talk with her about God long enough, she'd make some decisions about that. That's the way she is. I made a decision not to do that, but she's set in her way about nothing.

[00:10:32] WILLIAM: And your father is sort of industrious? He's a hard worker, and he's very emotional and very passive.

[00:10:48] TYREE: He's a lot of other things too, but he is that.

[00:10:58] WILLIAM: So in terms of your characteristics, you probably picked up the emotional aspect from your father?

[00:11:06] TYREE: [?If you do learn those things?]

[00:11:09] WILLIAM: You definitely learned them things. You definitely do. They don't come out of nowhere.

[00:11:13] TYREE: I look like my mother.

[00:11:16] WILLIAM: Yeah, but there are other ingredients, in terms of leadership and rationality and logic, that's probably coming from your mother's side, but the sensitivity, that's one thing that comes from your father.

[00:11:39] TYREE: Maybe. [? I feel like you're being generous ?] I mean, if you met him you'd know he's that.

[00:11:46] WILLIAM: He's a very sensitive man?

[00:11:47] TYREE: Yeah. But the competition has got him right now, and that's kicking his behind. He's trying to be in business because he ain't got—I mean, he's forced to charge you what he can, right, but he ends up getting ripped off.

[00:12:03] WILLIAM: Because he's not aggressive.

[00:12:05] TYREE: Yeah. It's precisely that.

[00:12:08] WILLIAM: So the characteristics that make him what he is, and create the problem for him to deal with the society now by being non-aggressive and passive, he can't cope with an aggressive society unless he have somebody doing the aggressive aspect for him.

[00:12:23] TYREE: Right. He tried that, and he ended up getting ripped off.

[00:12:28] WILLIAM: Well, that's obvious to me.

[00:12:33] TYREE: He had the credit, and the white dude was supposed to have the technical know-how on the job, the Bellevue Community College Project, just ripped him off. He lost \$20,000-\$30,000, and a lot more than that. I mean, he lost probably \$20,000 of his own money, and \$100,000 of credit kind of money. But he's [inaudible].

[00:13:03] WILLIAM: Because somebody probably ripped him off.

Okay, I'm just wondering about that because your father sounds like my father. There's a really close relation. That's the only thing bothering me when I do this analysis. I'm looking at my family, they're looking at me, and I said, "My father is one of these sensitive, brilliant persons." Intellectual. He's highly intellectual, but he can't cope with the chicken shit world and drowning in a bottle. My father's an alcoholic. He can't deal with the world.

[00:13:36] TYREE: Mine is drinking more than his fair share now.

[00:13:40] WILLIAM: On my mother's side of the family, she's a pragmatic, domineering—She walks in a place and makes everyone stand and take notice. She walks to school and they be running around trying to do her thing for her. Just a powerful woman. You can see the dichotomy in terms of catalysts. I have some of the catalysts of both sensitive and pragmatic.

[00:14:06] TYREE: If you could see my father in his own habitat, he'd really be comfortable. He stayed on that farm in Texas. They ended up—By the time the kids were all grown over 30, they ended up with like 60-70 acres of land, 80 acres of land in two different places. Had he stayed there, and farmed that land lived that kind of life outside of the pressures and stuff, he could have been both successful in the world, definitely successful in society, have money and stuff like that, and he could have been happy.

[00:15:10] WILLIAM: I would question the second assertion that he could be happy. He might have made money if he could have survived. The question when I would raise is that, because his father was killed, and because he was passive and sensitive, that I don't think he could have took the harsh reality of that economy in Texas.

[00:15:30] TYREE: Well, no, but it's not like he just—My position is that he could be isolated from the extent—See, what he's had to do is day-to-day urban hustle as a small businessman, and that's much more strenuous than trying to run a farm.

[00:15:48] WILLIAM: But he couldn't survive in that environment. The environment was just too overbearing. My father did the same thing. He split. He ran out west to California and floated around in this white nebulous society. It took him years and years to get reoriented to being Black again.

[00:16:06] TYREE: Many people can think that it's like being from another country being from out there, but by the time I came to know him, of course that wasn't the case. I mean, being in Texas and California was such that it didn't matter. I mean, I didn't notice a difference.

[00:16:16] WILLIAM: But in that time when he came out here, [inaudible]

[00:16:20] TYREE: I can understand that.

[00:16:21] WILLIAM: I think that's what the big thing is. That environment wouldn't allow him—The environment doesn't allow for Black sensitive men to stay home. They had to leave unless they were totally stuck in all their manhood. You couldn't fight that environment.

[00:16:38] TYREE: He almost got a dog on time. He took a gun from a cop on time. I was a little boy.

[00:16:45] WILLIAM: But see, that was—That type of thing, it was an emotional response. It wasn't a rational or logical—

[00:16:53] TYREE: Oh, yeah. He didn't plan it.

[00:16:54] WILLIAM: It was an emotional response. So, in that sense, he couldn't control his temper. That don't mean that—Because he's passive, that'll mean that he don't have a temper.

[00:17:04] TYREE: That's what happened. The cops came and stuck the gun in the car. Called him a boy and shit. I remember him, my mother, and my brother, and me in the car. He took the gun from the cop. [inaudible]. That's what it was. I guess you're right. People feel like, when I stay here, we end up telling somebody [inaudible].

[00:17:28] WILLIAM: Right. In terms of that kind of emotion, the thing about it is, he's very highly emotional. So, in other words, you don't have to be irrational. Although he's passive, but at some point in time, he can be stimulated to react in an irrational manner, in some manner that is not susceptible to the environment which he lives in. I think he had to live for his own person and come out here and enter a whole business. I don't understand about the whole thing is, basically, how do you get involved with these three people in the business, and he brought them out?

[00:18:06] TYREE: Well, see what it was, it was three people, and one of them knew—One of them was an electrical engineer, so he knew the trade. The other was really into real estate, but he also knew the trade. He was a hustler, and he learned the trade. And so the three of them worked together. Then, when the times changed, Mr. Gary was able, of course, get a job as an engineer, because he couldn't during that time. Mr. Glen was more into real estate, and he took a job at the Boeing company. So my father was like the one left. Now, I guess they could have stayed, and he'd been like one who ran there, and they ran some corporations, but, you know, the Black men were not into all that kind of technical stuff at the time. That's how he ended up buying them out. It's not like he made more money and was smarter and bought them out.

[00:19:14] WILLIAM: He just fell into their hair.

[00:19:15] TYREE: Yeah. It was available.

[00:19:21] WILLIAM: Okay, so I've got a contrast of a final profile now, in terms of your characteristics.

[00:19:54] TYREE: I think that being the last child creates some kind of problems for an individual. It makes them less able to cope with stuff, at least personal stuff anyway, than say like a first child. My oldest boy is responsible, my oldest sister is totally responsible. I don't know how far that goes. You might be different in your kind of family. Are you an only child?

[00:20:25] WILLIAM: No, I'm the oldest. I am the oldest, and the rest of them are all younger.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:20:34] WILLIAM: You got the Seattle Central Civil Rights Commission.

[00:20:37] TYREE: Yeah, that's the civil rights committee. Now, they're going to get people that we can talk about who will not own that, but who fit into that little category. Those folks, by and large, still talk to the power structure, still interpret the mood of Black community for the power structure and still give those passive kind of okays at that level.

[00:21:05] WILLIAM: So what you're talking about it the Negro Agent.

[00:21:07] TYREE: I mean, those people are still there, and they consider themselves civil rights leaders, rather than businessmen, so to speak. Some of them are businessmen, they're professionals, by and large. But those people still exist in this city right today whether they are preachers, teachers, doctors, or lawyers. If there's a demonstration going to be held, for example, there was a Black demonstration dealing with the killing of Joe Hebert. The man talked to them about it, to get their opinion on how to deal with it. The example of that was the Joe Hebert killing. When the chief of police called down his crew, normally, the chief of police don't. If it was CFA National Bank, he would not call a public meeting. He didn't like the ex-jock. What's his name? He was a stockbroker or something, and a bunch of other stuff too. Luther Carr. He invited Luther Carr and three or four other Black men, maybe even at separate times, to his office to talk to them about this situation. They would like set a mood, and let the man know what the community is willing to accept. The man can, by and large, probably—Probably already determined before they come in, and they move him from, on a scale of 100, they might move him back from 50 to 40.

[00:22:44] WILLIAM: But during the late 60s, the reason why he couldn't do that because he couldn't test the mood of the community. So if this community reflects some of the national type of attitude also—

[00:22:53] TYREE: Oh, well, see, they don't got no control over nothing. It's just that the man can bulldoze whatever position he wants to take over anyway on people. That wasn't the issue. They can do that anyway, but he's willing to give—Again, on a scale of 100, he's willing to give five to take five, and he contacts those people. They still exist. If that's gonna be—When they finally get down to the question of redlining and how can we best solve it, that's who they talk to. They don't talk to Eddie Rye. Eddie Rye used to be the one out there making the noise, but they sit down and talk to other people.

[00:23:45] WILLIAM: Well, and sometimes they do talk to Eddie Rye. Eddie Rye played both ends of the cards. He's on the community's side, talking from one side, and on another side, he's the only administrator talking to the other side. Rye is—I'm glad I'm not going to—I don't think I'm going to put this tape anywhere, but I think Rye is a poverty pimp pimping the community really.

[00:24:05] TYREE: Well, he's a young opportunist that now is militant, but the time will come when he won't be militant.

[00:24:12] WILLIAM: Well, he's not really, he never has been really militant. He had a militant rap.

[00:24:16] TYREE: In the sense of the word, that's what I mean. I don't mean that he's going to do nothing militant, but the fact that he go out and say those kinds of things means that they got to get somebody else to figure out what's going to placate those people who support Eddie Rye. They know how to placate Eddie Rye. If anything else, they could threaten to take his job and his \$20,000 a year salary.

[00:24:36] WILLIAM: But see, I really think that that's only symbolic in the first place. Rye is only used as a symbolic set of faith. Otherwise, he really don't have a position besides accommodation, but they allow him to exist to pacify a clientele. It's a symbolic type of emotional type of thing. He gives them hell. It reminds me of back in the '60s when I was in college, white folks was always saying, "Oh, you're militant. We got to accept you now. We accept what you say." They never really took you very serious, because they saw it as only a symbolic sort of thing."Okay, you got it out of your hair. Now let's come back to your common senses." So Rye serves a symbolic function. James O'Connell talks about this in *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. You should read it if you get a chance. He takes a Marxist analysis, but he talks about the symbolism anyway. He's saying that the middle class, and the people that are liberals, and the religious group, which comes into my category. I call them the white quasi-power brokers. I think it's a good definition for—In the Black community, I think quasi-power brokers, essentially, I don't think they have any absolute power themselves, but they can come into power. That would fit the American Friends and other people also. But Rye serves that function, and I don't know if he knowingly, don't understand it, and most people don't. They think they're serving some other function.

[00:26:14] TYREE: I believe that about him. I believe that about him that he doesn't knowingly—I mean, even though he's outwardly an opportunist when you see like the way he dresses, and what money he makes, and the cars he drives and all that, but he thinks that you can mix them up. He thinks that you can, on one hand, take from the man, be dependent on him for your livelihood, and on another hand be militant.

[00:26:41] WILLIAM: Which is impossible. It's incredible. See, when you begin to look at people that possess being militant, look at their social life. In the rise in the heyday of the militant thing, they would run out here in

the shelter and run off their rap and they did it 10 or 15 minutes later, or 30 minutes later, they go down to Hindquarter and shack up some white bar. So, in other words, you begin to spend \$100 a night. You begin to see the contradiction in terms of what they're saying and what they do, and the man understands this. He understands what they're doing. He sanctioned that, he legitimized it, he accepts that. You know, you want to sleep with [inaudible], we got a bunch of them. We can cut these off, and you can sleep with it. No care. You can go and do your thing and be here, and we know where you're at because there's no consistency. And there's a whole bunch of them down there. Vince Hayes, all these people.

[00:27:41] TYREE: What was that guy's name? He served on the State's Joint Apprenticeship Committee. And I couldn't get on that. I mean, I wanted to do that. It was like, so key to our work, but the governor appointed him to it, and he's happy. I don't know. He's a Black dude, he's got a jaguar, he's a playboy.

[00:28:01] WILLIAM: A Black dude? He's a NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] lawyer? Greg?

[00:28:03] TYREE: No, no, he ain't a lawyer. Arthur Simmons. That was his name.

[00:28:03] WILLIAM: Oh, I didn't know Arthur Simmons was on the committee.

[00:28:12] TYREE: Yeah, he was. He was so unimportant, he didn't go to meetings. He finally resigned. But the point I was going to make was that when he got an envoy with management against working people. It was in his interest to do that. I mean, the argument was that trade unions were racist; however, Black people belong to trade unions. I mean, the meat cutters are not—I meant the retail clerks are not racist. So, to do something against the retail clerks' union, you're doing it against Black people and poor white people. That's where—Art Simmons is by and large a worker; he's a welder.

[00:29:01] WILLIAM: But, see, the problem with that is these people really don't understand the dynamics which occur in the society. They don't even understand what's happened to them. They take a position based on their information, the limited information they have, and the limited sense of analysis, and a limited sense of limited ability to make analysis. In other words, they operate—My whole contention in terms of university, and this was what I'm really into right now, is that you have to educate Black folks very well in order to not allow them to create counter-revolutionary situations for you, because if you don't educate them well, then the same people, they got put in position or responsibility to stop you from moving anywhere in the society or doing anything to liberate yourself. So my contention is now is that you try to educate these people as best as you can, because if you don't educate them, well, you're in a world of trouble, because they will come back to haunt you at some point in time in the future.

[00:30:01] TYREE: I don't believe that you educate them. I believe that you organize into the manner that you create a democratic structure. In essence, it's a democratic structure that does not allow people— Oh no, I shouldn't've said educated. Everybody in the structure has to be clear because they, number one, they're in a decision-making position. They have to be clear on why they make decisions, what the decisions are that they make, and the processes and the implications of decisions that they make. So I guess you can say you're educating, but I think education alone is not enough. I think you got to be clear that folks are in a decision-making position, and I believe that can happen at every level. I mean, I saw a society where we were organized.

[00:31:08] WILLIAM: Well, I think I think you can put people in the position, but the thing about it is, depending on how you're going about the change strategy, there's very definite means of trying to make changes, even make it begin to make it in terms of a marginal sense—